Secure your prints

Rethink your printer strategy with these document security features

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Document security is important — and while that's especially true with companies that are required to comply with regulations like the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), every business has information to protect.

Most companies, however, don't manage their printers in a way that helps keep printed documents as secure as their digital files.

"Take an architecture firm, for example. If its printed blueprints are not secured, that could cause a problem and the firm could lose business. You also don't want proprietary information that's unique to your company or your client list to get out," says Matt White, subject matter expert on managed print services at Blue Technologies.

Smart Business spoke with White about document security features to consider for your printing software and hardware solutions, which will enhance compliance and protect sensitive information.

What features can improve the document security of your printers?
Printed documents can be a security risk. They get left on the printer, or someone else picks them up by mistake. If you have health plan or employee compensation information, you don't want just anyone to see those documents when you print them. Features like follow-me printing and secure print release mitigate that. You basically print into a queue and it holds your print jobs until you release them at the machine, to pick

up right away. This can be tied into software, where if you have a badge, you can swipe that and then print out everything in holding. It can also be tied into your hardware, so it doesn't matter what machine you're at or even what floor you're on, if you've already sent the print job.

Not only does this help with document security, it also cuts down on employees printing documents and then not remembering to pick them up.

Rules-based printing also can improve your document security. Rules-based printing allows you to put specific rules in place to limit where the prints go, or even stop people from printing documents altogether. Some of the solutions are even capable of automatically re-directing certain documents to another machine, and an employee will get a pop-up that lets him or her know it was re-directed.

A lot of times rules-based printing is used for cost efficiencies, sending large print jobs to printers that are more cost effective. But, for example, if you have specific HR software that has employee records, you also can put rules in place that say nothing can be printed out of the employee records software to the copier. Instead, they have to be printed to small desktop printers.

Specialized printing techniques also make it possible to have printed watermarks that will vanish or appear if a protected document is copied or scanned.

How does a business owner know whether these print security features are working?
If you implement a solution capable of follow-me printing, secure print and/or rules-based printing, you'll want to know if these solutions are actually helping. That's where your technology expert can provide dashboards and reporting that give you enhanced visibility into what's being printed.

With different software solutions, you can log in and see at a glance the health of your printing. You can see how many jobs were left at the machine, how many jobs were not printed but left in the queue, how many jobs were automatically redirected, how many jobs were automatically converted from color to black and white, how many were automatically sent to more cost-effective copiers, etc.

It's a check and balance for whether the solution is actually providing document security, which is certainly useful if you need to prove compliance under regulations like HIPAA. ●